The delegations expressed their full commitment to the pursuit of national policies to protect labour rights and advance labour welfare. However, the Meeting was of the unanimous view that there is no theoretical or empirical evidence establishing a clear linkage between trade and labour standards. The Meeting expressed concern about the persistent efforts to bring this non-trade issue on to the agenda of the WTO notwithstanding the fact that the International Labour Organisation (ILO) is an appropriate forum to look into the issue and has requisite competence and expertise in the area. The Meeting concluded that the subject of labour standards should not be brought into WTO in any form.

On Government Procurement, the Meeting felt that developing countries should at this stage continue to retain the option of joining the plurilateral Government Procurement Agreement only as and when they perceive this to be beneficial to them. The Meeting agreed that it would be necessary to get more clarifications about some proposals on this subject to consider whether a multilateral agreement on government procurement is desirable.

The issue of trade and environment has been discussed in the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) for about two years now. It has been recognised that the linkages between trade and environment are complex, but that trade is not the primary cause of environmental problems. Major areas for further work include, inter alia, the relationship between the multilateral trading system and the Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs), and the effect of environment measures on the market access of developing countries, particularly the need to safeguard and enhance their market access and make available Environmentally Sound Technologies and Products (EST & Ps) on fair and most favourable terms for meeting environmental obligations. The Meeting recalled the Rio Principles recognising the need to take into account the development context of environmental standards, to avoid unilateralism and disguised protectionism on environmental justifications, and to acknowledge the common but differentiated responsibilities in addressing environmental problems. The Meeting also felt that consideration should be given to the transfer of EST & Ps to developing countries on favourable, non-commercial and equitable terms in suggesting effective approaches to address environmental problems. There was a strong objection to unilateral action and disguised protection through trade measures taken for environmental purposes. Many delegations agreed that the present Article XX of the GATT 1994 is adequate to address all legitimate trade measures taken for protection of the environment. The Meeting gave importance to the removal of all trade restrictions and distortions that have negative effects on environment. It was agreed that further work is required on all issues identified under the ten items before the CTE.

The delegations expressed satisfaction that this Meeting has contributed positively towards building up better understanding about 'New Issues'. The Meeting emphasised the need to continue this process of mutual consultations and exchange of views in Geneva as well as the Capitals during the run-up to the SMC.

The Chairman warmly thanked all distinguished delegates for taking the trouble to join this Preparatory Meeting at relatively short notice and for their excellent free and frank contributions which led to a very beneficial exchange of views. He hoped that the delegates had enjoyed their brief stay in India and wished all overseas delegates a safe return home.

**Changes in Policies for EOUs/EPZs**

484. SHRI NAMDEO DIWATHE : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the performance of Export Oriented Units and Export Processing Zones is satisfactory;

(b) if not, whether the Government propose to review the policies for the functioning of EOUs and EPZs; and

(c) if so, the details thereof alongwith the areas where changes are proposed to be effected?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) Exports from Export Oriented Units and Export Processing Zones have been growing steadily. During 1995-96 exports from EOU/EPZ units registered a growth of 32% over the previous year, which is quite satisfactory.

(b) and (c). Do not arise.

**Social Package for PSUs**

485. SHRI SARAT PATTANAYAK : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to formulate a social package for major Public Sector Undertakings in the country; and

(b) if so the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) and (b). At present there is no proposal to formulate a general social package for major public sector undertakings. Taking suitable enterprise-specific measures is a continuous process.

**Banking Ombudsman Scheme**

486. SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the places and insitutions covered under the Banking Ombudsman scheme so far;

(b) the number of cases settled by each of the ombudsman till date;

(c) whether the Government propose to extend the scheme to Regional Rural Banks and Insurance and other Financial Institutions also; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) and (b). Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have so far appointed 11 Ombudsmen under the Banking Ombudsman scheme. The institutions covered under the Scheme are commercial banks and scheduled primary cooperative banks. The names of the Ombudsmen, location, jurisdiction, date of appointment and number of complaints settled etc. are given below :-

| S. No. | Name of Ombudsmen | Location of office | Date of appointment | Jurisdiction | Complaints withdrawn/ settled as a result of Ombudsman initiatives (as on 30.6.1995) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Shri B.N. Shetye | Mumbai | 14.6.95 | Maharashtra and Goa | 10 |
| 2. | Shri A.K. Pandya | Bhopal | 14.6.95 | Madhya Pradesh | 5 |
| 3. | Shri B.L. Chadha | New Delhi | 14.6.95 | Delhi, Haryana, J&K and Dist. Gaziabad in U.P. | 31 |
| 4. | Shri J.C. Lynn | Bangalore | 24.6.95 | Karnataka | 8 |
| 5. | Shri R.C. Kapoor | Chandigarh | 24.6.95 | Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Union Territory of Chandigarh | 17 |
| 6. | Shri R.K. Ragala | Hyderabad | 4.10.95 | Andhra Pradesh | 9 |
| 7. | Shri J.P. Sharma | Patna | 8.10.95 | Bihar | 25 |
| 8. | Shri O.P. Sodhani | Jaipur | 11.1.96 | Rajasthan | 13 |
| 9. | Shri G.C. Agarwal | Kanpur | 24.5.96 | Uttar Pradesh excluding Distt. Ghaziabad | - |
| 10. | Shri H.N. Das | Guwahati | 5.6.96 | Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura. | - |
| 11. | Dr. Sitakant Mahapatra | Bhubaneshwar | 28.9.96 | Orissa | - |

(c) and (d). RBI does not have any proposal at present to extend this scheme to Regional Rural Banks and All India term lending financial institutions. There is also no proposal for setting up a Ombudsman for Life Insurance Corporations as it already has an elaborate grievance redressal machinery which is working satisfactorily. However, it has been agreed, in principle, to set up an ombudsman for the General Insurance Corporation.

**Multinational Companies**

487. SHRI HARIN PATHAK :
SHRI R.L.P. VERMA :

Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to states :

(a) whether certain multinationals had evinced interest to take over Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. (BHEL) and also some other Public Sector Undertakings either in part or as a whole;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether BHEL has entered into joint vontures with some multi-nationals;

(d) if so, the details thereof and the adventage to be derived from such joint ventures; and

(e) the impact of taking over of Public Sector Undertakings by multi-national companies on indigenous industry?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) BHEL is in the process of establishing two Joint Venture Companies for which Government approval has been given recently.